

Robbery Prevention

The Crime: Robbery – the completed or attempted theft, directly from a person, of property by force or threat of force, with or without a weapon, and with or without injury.

The Victims – women are usually targeted for purse snatchings (offender grabs the purse from the victim's arm and forcibly takes it). Men are targeted more as victims of strong-arm robberies (use of physical force) or armed robberies (use of a dangerous weapon).

The Offender – Robbers are usually desperate people. They are often times under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol during the offense. Weapons are used to ensure control. Desperation, intoxication and weapons make a volatile combination.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics', National Crime Victimization Survey 2001 reported that 55% of robbery victims in the United States faced an armed offender.

The North Carolina Crime Clock showed an increase in robbery occurrences from the year 2000 to 2001 in North Carolina with an average of one robbery from a person occurring every hour.

Although burglary and theft can have emotional and financial effects, robbery, a violent or potentially violent crime, can have a much greater impact on one's life-style and feelings about vulnerability. Society's inherent fear of a violent confrontation causes decisions based on personal safety to be made every day. "Is this neighborhood safe?" or "Is it safe to go out walking at night?" are frequent questions that reflect a concern and control behavior. Complaints such as, "It's not fair. I should be able to go and come as I please without fear of being robbed," may well be justified, but will not change one's circumstances. Whereas, learning and implementing safety and prevention measures that actually reduce vulnerability to crimes such as street robbery will.

By implementing prevention measures and observing the basic rules of "common sense" your chances of being victimized are greatly reduced. Since most strong-arm robberies occur between the hours of sunset and sunrise, the best rule to follow is simply, stay inside at night. However, being confined to a secure area after the sun goes down is not usually possible, and is probably bordering on ridiculous to even consider it.

Pedestrians:

- Be alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Know your destination and route.
- Plan ahead so that when you walk you are very visible to other people. This means that IF you must walk alone, choose open, well-lit, and well-traveled areas.
- Avoid taking shortcuts through deserted areas such as parks, playgrounds and vacant lots.
- Avoid dark corners, alleys and entrances to buildings. Crooks don't like to strike where eyewitnesses can provide the police with a detailed account.
- The buddy system works best. Less likely to be targeted. If something does happen you have a better chance of getting help.
- Leave your purse at home if possible. If you must carry one, carry the smallest one you have, hold it firmly, close to your body. Purse-snatchers prefer to grab from behind. Or get a 'fanny pack.'
- If you walk or jog at night, consider getting a dog that can accompany you. Criminal offenders relate that a dog is one of the most effective crime deterrents.
- If you work late hours, arrange to leave at the same time as a co-worker. Try to avoid parking far away from your work site. Be aware of your surroundings at all times by making eye contact

with passers-by and glancing occasionally behind you. This type of "body language" will make you less attractive to a prospective mugger.

- If you sense that you are being followed, change directions or cross the street. If the person persists, run to the nearest place where you'll find people.
- If someone asks directions, maintain a safe distance.
- DO NOT allow a stranger to follow you to your doorstep. Go to a public place where you can call the police whenever you feel threatened.
- When fleeing from danger, alert others as well as the person posing a threat. Yell "Fire...Fire...Fire!" or activate a personal alarm device.

Drivers:

- Park only in well-lit areas at night. Check for strangers who might be "casing" the area before you exit or enter your car.
- Valuables should be kept in the trunk, locked glove compartment, or out of sight whenever traveling or leaving a vehicle parked.
- Avoid fumbling for your keys; have them in your hand as you approach your car.
- Always check the back seat for uninvited guests before getting inside.
- Have your vehicle serviced before long trips.
- Carry traveler's checks instead of large amounts of cash.
- Keep enough gas in the tank so you won't get stranded.
- Keep all doors locked and windows rolled up most of the way.
- Stay on well-traveled, well-lit roads.
- Preplan route of travel and notify someone of plan and arrival times.
- Try to avoid late night driving.
- If you must travel at night regularly, don't carry more than you can afford to lose. One suggestion is to carry a second wallet containing a few \$1.00 bills and old credit cards, which are normally destroyed or discarded. If confronted at knife or gunpoint, give the suspect the second wallet and concentrate on a good physical description to give to the police.
- Do not stop to assist stranded motorists. Call for help at the nearest phone - noting milepost.
- If you are being followed by another car, drive into an open gas station, stay in your car, and ask the attendant to call the police. Better yet, drive straight to the nearest police station for assistance.
- If you are "rear-ended" by another vehicle, motion for the driver to follow you to a public place.
- "Bump and rob" artists stage such incidents to lure unsuspecting drivers out of their cars to rob them of their wallet or purse. Drive to the nearest public place. If a driver won't follow you, obtain as thorough a description as you can and report the incident to the police.
- If your car breaks down, seek a phone or call box only if it is safe to do so. Place a "Call Police" banner in your rear window and raise the hood. If a "good Samaritan" approaches, crack a window and ask them to call the police or your tow company.
- If someone suspicious approaches your vehicle at a red light or stop sign, blow the horn.
- Do not pull over for flashing headlights. An emergency or police vehicle has red or red and blue flashing lights.
- If you become lost, find a public place, like a service station, to read your map or ask for directions.
- If you are told that something wrong with your vehicle, do not stop immediately. Drive to the nearest service station or another well-lighted public area.
- If using an automatic teller machine, be sure the area is well lit. Count your money inside your locked vehicle with the windows up.

At Home:

- Check for signs of forced entry such as broken glass, a torn screen or pry marks before venturing inside.
- Make it a habit to leave a few dollars out in the open near your entryway. Back out quietly if

you see the money is gone.

- NEVER feel reluctant to call the police if you sense the possibility of an intruder inside.
- Screen all strangers knocking at your door. Interview them through a one-way peephole while your door is locked. Anyone who refuses to present his or her driver's license or employee I.D. upon request should be reported to the police.
- Do not let strangers use your phone. Call for them if you believe there is a need.
- Properly secure all openings at nighttime. "Cat burglars" are deterred when the only means of gaining entry would require breaking glass or smashing a door.
- Don't assume that upper floor windows are too high for a burglar's reach.

At Work:

- Meet clients at the office during business hours.
- You are about to meet a "stranger".
- Do not under any circumstances conduct business in your hotel/motel room.
- First meeting, set parameters—beginning/ending times, "you are expected at next appointment at ending time."
- Make it obvious your activities are being monitored.
- Always write or enter into computer client's information. This way they are identified.
- Develop a code word with people checking on you to let them know when you are in trouble.
- Receive arranged phone calls to check on you during the time you are out with a client (most motel desk will provide this service).
- WARNING SIGNS may be,
 - Your client expects more than business.
 - The client wants to control where to meet.
 - Evasive answers (not truthful) to your questions.
 - Offer seems "too good to be true."
 - The client asks for a last minute or late night meeting.

At a Hotel/Motel:

Before trip—pack flashlight, make a copy of important documents (credit cards, driver's license, etc.), photograph valuables that you are taking with you, i.e. jewelry, etc.

- Safe motel/hotel:
 - Modern electronic locks.
 - Dead bolt lock and peephole.
 - Smoke and fire detectors and sprinklers in your room, hallways and meeting rooms.
 - Outside dialing from each room.
 - Check hallway phone to see if you can call your room (should not be able to).
 - Call operator from outside phone to see if they give out your room #, if so get another room and speak with manager.
 - Security should provide escorts to and from car and room.
 - Parking car—valet parking best, if not available follow rules to parking lot parking.

Checking in:

- Stay with your luggage.
- Keep an eye out in a busy lobby.
- Ask the attendant to write down your room number on a piece of paper, and do not announce it.
- Sign only first initial and last name—don't use titles, etc.

- Do not lay your credit cards down on the counter.
- Instruct the attendant not to give out your name or room number to anyone, without your written permission.
- On check-in get two business cards or match books with hotel name and address in case you get lost returning to hotel.
- Check closets and bathrooms to make sure no one is hiding there (security should assist you with this).
- Check windows and doors to insure they lock properly.
- Use self-installed door/window or personal alarm devices when in room.
- Find and practice fire safety measures in case of an emergency.

Some confrontations are unavoidable:

- The Bureau of Justice Statistics', National Crime Victimization Survey 2001 reported that 55% of robbery victims faced an armed offender. It is vital that you be prepared to minimize your risk of injury.
- If confronted, try to stay calm. An assailant will be less likely to attack you if you appear controlled and self-confident.
- If the suspect says he has a weapon in his pocket, DON'T force his bluff.
- When facing someone wielding a weapon DO NOT RESIST! Cooperate! Be willing to give up your valuables. A purse, wallet or jewelry is not worth fighting for. Your life is more valuable than replaceable possessions.
- Never try to apprehend the suspect yourself.
- Try to mentally note your assailant's appearance without staring.
- Use physical self-defense techniques only as a last resort to protect yourself when attacked. Noise-makers (Whistles), personal alarms are good too, if you know how and when to use them.
- BEST WEAPON IS YOUR BRAIN

After the confrontation:

- Go to the phone and dial 9-1-1 as soon as possible. Let the police operator take charge and instruct you.
- Remember, your quick actions in notifying the police will increase their chance of apprehending the suspect and preventing future victims.
- Being the victim of a violent crime can have lasting emotional effects.
- If you are a victim, don't suppress your feelings of anger or frustration.
- If you are the friend or relative of a victim, lend your emotional support by being available to listen.

REMEMBER YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SAFETY!

Business Robbery Prevention:

Opening & Closing Procedures:

- Use two people.
- Check surroundings for suspicious persons or vehicles.
- Check store exterior for signs of break-in. NEVER ENTER, CALL POLICE.
- Enter through a visible door.
- One employee goes in and checks the store before giving the "all clear" sign. Then the other employee enters and the doors are locked again until the regular business hours.
- Never open early for anyone
- When closing just reverse the opening procedure.

Be Alert to Suspicious Customers:

- Robbers usually “case” their target.
- Loitering in the store parking lot.
- Early shoppers.
- Acts nervous or “just not right”
- Tries to keep you later than you are supposed to.
- Same car keeps driving by or is parked outside the building for an extended period.

Security Awareness:

- Post robbery prevention posters.
- Display height markers for identifying suspects.
- Keep small amounts of cash on hand if possible.
- Use a drop safe that is visible.
- Use CCTV

Robbery Alarm System:

- Differ from burglar alarms.
- Employee activated.
- Serve two purposes 1) Alert police and neighboring businesses. 2) Deterrent to robbery when existence is evident.
- Easy to activate.
- Employees should be trained to use system.